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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/005,466	11/08/2001	Takashi Yasuo	10876.51US01	7240
23552	7590	07/16/2004	EXAMINER	
MERCHANT & GOULD PC P.O. BOX 2903 MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402-0903			WEINER, LAURA S	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			1745	

DATE MAILED: 07/16/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/005,466	YASUO ET AL.
	Examiner	Art Unit
	Laura S Weiner	1745

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address.
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-16 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) 11-16 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
6) Claim(s) 1-10 is/are rejected.
7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a))

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Election/Restrictions

1. Applicant's election of Group I, claims 1-9 in the reply filed on 6-3-04 is acknowledged. Because applicant did not distinctly and specifically point out the supposed errors in the restriction requirement, the election has been treated as an election without traverse (MPEP § 818.03(a)).

After further review, Group II, claim 10, drawn to a fuel cell was rejoined with claims 1-9, drawn to a fuel cell separator.

2. Claims 11-16 are withdrawn from further consideration pursuant to 37 CFR 1.142(b) as being drawn to a nonelected invention, there being no allowable generic or linking claim. Election was made **without** traverse in the reply filed on 6-3-04.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

3. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent, or on an international application by another who has fulfilled the requirements of paragraphs (1), (2), and (4) of section 371(c) of this title before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent.

The changes made to 35 U.S.C. 102(e) by the American Inventors Protection Act of 1999 (AIPA) and the Intellectual Property and High Technology Technical Amendments Act of 2002 do not apply when the reference is a U.S. patent resulting directly or indirectly from an international application filed before November 29, 2000. Therefore, the prior art date of the reference is determined under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) prior to the amendment by the AIPA (pre-AIPA 35 U.S.C. 102(e)).

4. Claims 1-4, 6-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Fukui et al. (6,440,598).

Fukui et al. teaches in column 4, lines 51-60, a fuel cell comprising a substrate containing stainless steel. Fukui et al. teaches in column 3, lines 50-57, a separator having a stainless steel substrate coated with a metal plating layer in which carbonaceous particles are dispersed in a state exposed to the atmosphere. The plating layer may be a Ni-Cr, Ti, Ta or Ti-Ta layer. The carbonaceous particles to be dispersed in the plating layer may be carbon black or graphite particles. The Ni-Cr plating layer preferably contains 5-60 wt% Cr. Fukui et al. teaches in column 5, lines 33-44, a separator having a stainless steel substrate onto which carbon particles such as graphite particles or carbon black aggregates directly adhere with dotted distribution. Fukui et al. teaches that if petroleum or coke as soot or tar is used as the carbonaceous particles, an oxide film or the like would be easily formed on the carbonaceous particles.

[Therefore, a separator having a stainless steel substrate coated with a Ni-Cr plating layer (5-60 wt% Cr), having carbonaceous particles such as petroleum, coke or tar dispersed in the Ni-Cr plating layer in which an oxide film was formed is taught].

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

5. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claim 5 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Fukui et al. (6,440,598) in view of Kato et al. (WO 01/03214, abstract).

Fukui et al. teaches in column 4, lines 51-60, a fuel cell comprising a substrate containing stainless steel.

Fukui et al. discloses the claimed invention as explained above except for specifically teaching that ribs and channels are formed on at least one principal surface of the substrate.

Kato et al. teaches a separator for a solid-polymer fuel cell in which the separator includes a substrate and ribs. The ribs are formed by printing conducting material on both sides of the substrate. A fluid channel is formed between adjacent ribs.

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to use a separator which comprises ribs and channels because Kato et al. teaches that it is known that a substrate for a separator comprises ribs and channels.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Laura S Weiner whose telephone number is 571-272-1294. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F (6:30-4:00).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patrick Ryan can be reached on 571-272-1292. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).



Laura S Weiner
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1745

July 15, 2004